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Republican leaders in the House traveled over the weekend to the heart of Afghanistan's thriving opium trade — an area that could soon be the main front in a renewed military push to secure the war-ravaged country.

During their short visit, House Minority Leader John A. Boehner (R-Ohio), Minority Whip Eric Cantor (R-Va.) and a group of other lawmakers met with Gulab Mangal, the governor of Helmand province, an area in the southwest corner of the country that produces two-thirds of the world's opium.

Mangal has become something of an icon for British, Dutch and U.S. troops in the province for staring down local drug lords and trying to root out government corruption, according to Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), a naval reservist who spent most of the holidays on duty in the region.

Boehner, Cantor and the others traveled to the province during a whirlwind weekend tour of Iraq and Afghanistan.